



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 98
Finance Committee
Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Good afternoon Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 98, legislation to create the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs Commission and the Office of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs.

As the daughter of Laotian refugees, I understand the struggles and complexities of what being a new American family looks like. I am advocating for the creation of the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Affairs Commission and the Office of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs because I understand the unique difficulties of addressing the needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population in Ohio. The formation of this commission will be an important step in ensuring that state government is accessible and equitable to all Ohioans.

As immigrant AAPI populations differ in culture, languages, religions, and socio-economic status, policy makers should be aware of the many differences present in this group. The primary responsibilities of this new commission would be to: gather and disseminate information concerning Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders; stimulate public awareness and advocacy of the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through education; coordinate and assist other public and private organizations that serve Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders; advise the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies on the priorities of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders populations; promote the delivery of state services across diverse communities; and provide resources for culturally appropriate organizations and language services.

According to the 2012 Mid-Year report on the State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Ohio, from former Governor Kasich's administration, Ohio's AAPI population is likely to continue to be among Ohio's fastest-growing demographic groups, second only to Hispanics or Latinos. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, the AAPI population increased nationally by 45.6%. Similarly, while Ohio's total population increased only 0.9% between 2000 and 2010, Ohio's AAPI population increased by 49.1% during this period.

Originally, the funding allocation for this legislation was modeled from the current allocation to the Ohio Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs. I recognize that this number may be a little ambitious for the formation of a new commission with a smaller population. I look forward to working with the Finance Committee members to amend the language of SB 98 to find an appropriate solution to form this important resource for AAPI Ohioans. I look forward to a thoughtful legislative process and appreciate your attention to this important issue. I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 98. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.